

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAB-01 SAM-01 NIC-01 IO-10 TRSE-00 FEA-01

INT-05 OES-03 EB-07 ACDA-05 /100 W

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R 120610Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3183

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1350

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, IZ

SUBJ: SYRIAN REPLY TO IRAQ'S CALL FOR ARAB LEAGUE FOREIGN
MINISTERS MEETING TO DISCUSS EUPHRATES WATERS

REF: DAMASCUS 1270

1. SUMMARY: KHADDAM HAS REQUESTED ARAB LEAGUE DISCUSSION
EUPHRATES RIVER ISSUE AT TECHNICAL LEVEL. BAATH PARTY
REGIONAL CONGRESS CONDEMNS IRAQI REGIME. WE HAVE
RECEIVED REPORTS OF HARRASSMENT IRAQI DIPLOMATS RESIDENT
DAMASCUS AND OF SYRIAN-IRAQI SKIRMISH NEAR BORDER. WE
NOTE DIFFERENCE IN RESPONSE TO IRAQI ATTACKS BETWEEN
ANGRY IDEOLOGICAL APPROACH OF BAATH PARTY
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AND CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE EXPRESSED BY MFA. END SUMMARY.

2. APRIL 11 DAMASCUS PRESS FRONT-PAGED FULL TEXT
OF FOREIGN MIN KHADDAM'S TELEGRAM TO ARAB LEAGUE
SECGEN RIYAD:

"WITH REFERENCE TO YOUR MESSAGE REGARDING IRAQI GOVERN-
MENT'S REQUEST TO SUMMON ARAB LEAGUE COUNCIL ON
FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL FOR EMERGENCY SESSION IN
ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 11 OF ARAB LEAGUE CHARTER
TO DISCUSS DISAGREEMENT ON DIVISION OF EUPHRATES
WATERS BETWEEN SYRIA AND IRAQ. WE AGREE TO HOLDING
MEETING ON TECHNICAL LEVEL AND NOT ON FOREIGN MINISTER
LEVEL SINCE SUBJECT IS TECHNICAL CONNECTED
WITH CALCULATING RIGHTS OF TWO PARTIES TO EUPHREATS
WATERS AND HAS NO POLITICAL ASPECT. AS YOU KNOW,
MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS IS TO DISCUSS POLITICAL
ISSUES. PLEASE COMMUNICATE THIS MEMORANDUM TO
FRATERNAL GOVERNMENTS."

3. APRIL 10 PRESS REPORTED ON FRONT PAGE VARIOUS
RESOLUTIONS TAKEN BY SIXTH BAATH PARTY REGIONAL CONGRESS,
INCLUDING CONDEMNATION IRAQI POLICIES IN FOLLOWING
LANGUAGE:

"CONGRESS DECIDED TO CONDEMN SUSPICIOUS RIGHT-WING
REGIME IN IRAQ FOR ITS COLLUSION WITH IRAN AND FOR
ITS SIGNING OF MARCH IRAQI-IRANIAN AGREEMENT WHICH
CONFIRMS ITS CONNECTION TO IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM,
ITS PERSISTENCE IN LIQUIDATING REVOLUTION IN ARABSTAN
REGION AND ITS BETRAYAL OF CAUSES OF ARAB NATION.
CONGRESS ALSO CONDEMNED THE FLAGGING AND NON-NATIONAL
STAND OF SUSPICIOUS RIGHT-WING REGIME IN IRAQ
VIS-A-VIS FUNDAMENTAL ARAB CAUSE -- THE PALESTINIAN
QUESTION -- AND CONSIDERS THIS ATTITUDE AN UNFORGIVE-
ABLE NATIONAL TREASON AND CRIME. CONGRESS ALSO
CONDEMNED PERSISTENCE OF SUSPICIOUS RIGHT-WING IN
IRAQ FOR PRACTICING SAVAGE TORTURE ON STRUGGLERS
BELONGING TO OUR ARAB PEOPLE IN IRAQ. CONGRESS ALSO
CONDEMNED ATTEMPTS OF RIGHTIST REGIME IN IRAQ TO
SABOTAGE ARAB SOLIDARITY." ON APRIL 11, BOTH DAMASCUS
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DAILIES CONTINUED EDITORIAL CRITICISM OF IRAQ.

4. ACCORDING TO ITALIAN DIPLOMATIC SOURCE, WHO
CLAIMED HIS INFORMATION CAME DIRECTLY FROM IRAQI
AMBASSADOR HERE, IRAQI DIPLOMATS IN DAMASCUS ARE
BEING SUBJECTED TO HARRASSMENT FROM SYRIAN AUTHORITIES.
AMBASSADOR AND HIS STAFF ARE UNDER CLOSE 24-HOUR
SURVEILLANCE. IRAQI "CULTURAL ATTACHE" HAS BEEN PNG'ED.

5. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD REPORT FROM LOCAL JOURNALIST AND LOCAL DIPLOMAT THAT MINOR BORDER SKIRMISH BETWEEN SYRIA AND IRAQ TOOK PLACE NEAR ABU KEMAL ABOUT FOUR DAYS AGO.

6. COMMENTING TO EMBOFF ON RECENT HEATING-UP OF SYRIAN-IRAQI DIFFERENCES, FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS SAID SYRIA HAD TWO PRINCIPAL CONCERNS: (A) EFFECT OF DISPUTE ON ITS "STRATEGIC DEPTH", THAT IS IRAQI SUPPORT AGAINST ISRAEL; AND (B) EFFECT OF DISPUTE ON SYRIA'S GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA WHICH SARG VALUES VERY HIGHLY.

7. COMMENT: KHADDAM'S RESPONSE TO ARAB LEAGUE APPEARS TO REFLECT FOREIGN MINISTRY'S DESIRE TO KEEP MATTER FROM ESCALATING FURTHER AND AFFECTING SYRIA'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER ARAB STATES. IT ALSO ACCORDS WITH SARG LINE PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED TO US (DAMASCUS 1270 THAT TURKEY MORE TO BLAME THAN SYRIA FOR LOW LEVEL EUPHRATES RIVER WATERS REACHING IRAQ. SYRIAN BAATH PARTY REACTION IS PREDICTABLY MORE STRIDENT. ADDITIONAL SURVEILLANCE OF IRAQI DIPLOMATS HERE ALSO SEEMS PLAUSIBLE.
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